



Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable (Oxford Quick Reference)

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Who or what is liable to jump the shark? Who first tried to nail jelly to the wall? Who was the first to cry "Women and children first"? The answers to these and many more questions are in this fascinating book. Here in one volume you can track down the stories behind the names and sayings you come across, whether in classic literature or today's news. Drawing on Oxford's unrivalled bank of reference and language online resources, this dictionary covers classical and other mythologies, history, religion, folk customs, superstitions, science and technology, philosophy, and popular culture. Extensive cross-referencing makes it easy to trace specific information, while every page points to further paths to explore. From "Barbie doll" to "bunny boiler," the dictionary gives reliable, up-to-date insights into the origin and history of words and phrases. It is a fascinating slice of cultural history and a browser's delight from start to finish.

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Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable (Oxford Quick Reference) From Oxford University Press Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #3154453 in Books
- Published on: 2006-10-23
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 5.00" h x 1.50" w x 7.50" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Mass Market Paperback
- 816 pages

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Fables and commonplace phrases originate from the need to articulate concepts and circumstances that defy conventional phraseology. Evolving from both written and spoken sources (though more commonly from the latter), they bring together words, names, and expressions that have cultural resonance. These volumes provide ample documentation of such terms in the English language, citing both origin and common usage. Beyond simple definitions, the works also include quotations from classical and modern literature. Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase & Fable, first issued in 1870, has flourished for over 100 years and has been updated frequently. (See LJ 7/00 for a review of the 16th edition.) The current work, ably edited by prolific lexicographer Room, who also worked on the 16th edition, borrows the style and approach of the original dictionary but focuses on material from the late 20th to the 21st centuries. Arranged alphabetically, this approachable work contains more than 8000 entries. Vastly more comprehensive, The Oxford Dictionary references some 20,000 citations. Knowles, managing editor of the Oxford quotations dictionaries, draws upon Oxford's unrivaled bank of language lore and literary tradition to span a vast array of topics, including classical mythology, religion, folk custom, history, science, and technology. The entries, whether brief citations or longer discussions boasting colorful details and lucid text, are distinguished by unparalleled research. Illustrative quotations and thousands of biographies are also included. Both of these volumes are vital reference tools required by all meaningful reference collections. Richard K. Burns, MSLS, Hatboro, PA
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From [Booklist](#)

This new edition of the *Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* has been substantially updated and revised since it was first published, in 2000. Although the first edition was a hefty 1,200 pages, this new edition is 805 pages. The reduction in size is comes from trimming the number of biographical and geographical entries, such as *Ferdinand of Aragon* and *Zurich*. The first edition also had numerous single-word entries, such as *fault*, *faience*, and *zucchetto*, that could be found in a regular dictionary. These types of entries have been taken out and replaced by many more contemporary phrases. Gone, too, are the boxed entries for special categories. The second edition has also changed the formatting of its entries, listing all phrases using the same word under that word, with numerous cross-references to related phrases. The first edition listed all phrases separately.

What makes this new edition especially valuable are the many new entries from politics, popular culture, science, and contemporary language, such as *axis of evil*, *chaos theory*, *elephant in the room*, *glass ceiling*, *ground zero*, *Sunni Triangle*, and many more. All entries explain what the phrase means and where it was first used. The second edition has also expanded the number of phrases from classic literature, history, mythology, religion, and figurative language using Oxford's extensive word and language online resources.

The major competitor is Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, the seventeenth edition of which was published in Great Britain last year. *Brewer's* was first published in 1870 and has always been very classically oriented, with numerous entries for the names of mythological characters, persons from the Bible, and historical personages, which were deleted from the *Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*. Without seeing the new *Brewer's*, it's probably safe to say that, although the two dictionaries have considerable overlap, each has a wide variety of entries that are unique.

The Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable is a highly useful tool to help understand what phrases mean and

where they come from and should definitely be added to all reference collections. It is recommended that libraries keep the first edition since many entries in the first edition have been deleted from the second. Libraries should also have *Brewer's* since its focus is more classical and it includes phrases that are not found in *Oxford*. Merle Jacob

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Review

"A highly useful tool."--*Booklist*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Todd Crain:

Nowadays reading books become more than want or need but also work as a life style. This reading practice give you lot of advantages. Advantages you got of course the knowledge the actual information inside the book that improve your knowledge and information. The details you get based on what kind of guide you read, if you want drive more knowledge just go with education books but if you want truly feel happy read one having theme for entertaining like comic or novel. The Oxford Dictionary of Phrase and Fable (Oxford Quick Reference) is kind of guide which is giving the reader unstable experience.

Donald Kelley:

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